

Mr. Speaker, I rise today in opposition to H.R. 471, the private school voucher program for the District of Columbia.

This bill would revive the ineffective and inefficient D.C. voucher program. The bill authorizes \$100 million over the next five years for only 1.3 percent of students to receive vouchers in D.C. – with no offset for the funding.

I do not support any attempt to resume funding the D.C. voucher system using taxpayer dollars intended for public schools. We should be investing public dollars in public schools, not diverting critically needed resources to private institutions. Private schools are not held to the same standards as our public schools – including civil rights laws and accountability measures – and are not required to provide the same services, such as educating individuals with disabilities.

Vouchers take scarce resources away from our children and provide no accountability for our tax dollars. While the D.C. voucher program was in effect, multiple studies found that the students in the program were not performing better academically compared to other students in the District. In fact, the program was so poorly run that some students were allowed to use vouchers to attend unaccredited schools.

The Republican House majority made the largest cut to education in our history in their continuing resolution for Fiscal Year 2011 (H.R. 1) that passed the House. In the same bill, they proposed to fund the D.C voucher system at \$15.5 million. Again, my Republican colleagues cut public education in all 50 states while reviving millions of dollars for vouchers for one percent of students in the District of Columbia.

For these reasons, I urge my colleagues to oppose H.R. 471 and any funding efforts for this failed program.

Mr. Speaker, I yield back my time.